DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 323 163 SO 030 345

AUTHOR Meyer, Kathleen M.
TITLE Gandhi: An Alternative for Conflict Resolution.
PUB DATE Aug 90
NOTE 8p.
PUB TYPE Guides - Classroom Use - Guides (For Teachers) (052)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Area Studies; *Class Activities; Colonialism; *Conflict Resolution; Foreign Countries; Imperialism; Problem Solving; Secondary Education; *Social Change; Social Studies; Teaching Methods; *World History
IDENTIFIERS *Gandhi (Mahatma); *India; Nonviolence

ABSTRACT

Designed to expose high school students to an alternative method of conflict resolution, this lesson revolves around the Indian movement for independence from Great Britain and the principles of non-violence advocated by Mahatma Gandhi which helped make that movement successful. The activities presented are designed to fit into a general world history class studying the themes of colonialism or imperialism, or when covering the history of India. A brief bibliography of works containing the writings of Gandhi and general texts on Indian independence is included. (DB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED323163

GANDHI: AN ALTERNATIVE FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
KATHLEEN M. MEYER
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Kathleen M. Meyer

Glenbard East High School
Lombard, Illinois 60148

August, 1990

SO 030 345

This project was completed as a component of a U.S. Department of Education Summer Seminar in India, 1989.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

RATIONALE

The world, since 1945, has changed dramatically. With the advent of nuclear weaponry, traditional forms of conflict resolution have become far more dangerous. Warfare, a standard method of conflict resolution, now carries with it the potential threat of global annihilation. Continued warfare does not seem, therefore, to present a viable, modern day option to solving conflicts between nation states. The threat of total destruction is too great.

Unfortunately, students in western civilization have been inundated with the virtues of warfare or violence as a method of conflict resolution. Most U.S. students are required to take U.S. history. In such a course, they will study no less than nine wars and countless interventions by our military. With the exception of Vietnam and perhaps Korea, we achieved our objectives in each war and in each intervention. If this had not been the case, we would have stopped having wars long ago. Warfare is extolled in Hollywood. Rambo has had a long string of successes not only in the films themselves but also at the box office. Violence on televison has long been a concern, with children watching an outrageous number of murders occurring on the screen in their own living rooms. It is no wonder that when students are asked how we should resolve some problem between ourselves and another country the answer usually involves killing the group that opposes us.

The purpose of this project is to expose students to an alternative method of conflict resolution that achieved its objectives. The project revolves around India's independence from Great Britain and the Gandhian principles that achieved it. This project is designed to fit into a general world history class. It can be used when studying the themes of colonialism, imperialism, or when studying the history of India. It is designed to be used in a high school setting with average or above average students. It is designed with freshmen and sophomores in mind but can be modified to accomodate upper classmen.

OBJECTIVES

1) To introduce students to an alternative method of conflict resolution,
2) To help students improve problem solving and cooperation skills,
3) To promote an increased understanding of the non-western world's contributions to our global civilization.

TIME: 2-3 class periods

STRATEGIES

1) DAY ONE:

Arrange students in two to six groups. Preferably no group would have more than four students in it so that each student will have input into the problem solving process. Each member in each group will recieve a briefing report marked "Status: Overlords" or "Status: Serfmen". Each member of each group will get the same report. There should be an equal number of Overlord and Serfmen groups. Once groups are arranged, have the students read the briefing reports. The Overlords represent Britain and the Serfmen represent India. Do not tell the students this at the outset since this knowledge might hinder their creativity in finding solutions.

Once students have read the material carefully have them decide in their groups what their response to the material should be. Have them word it in terms of an objective, a goal. Then have them come up with several ways to achieve their goal and have them give an explanation for why they think each particular method would be successful. Have them write all the material down as a group. When students complete this part of the activity lead a class discussion. Put the various responses on the board and discuss the merits of each as well as possible drawbacks both in the short term and in the long term. Also discuss which methods by one group provoke which actions by the other.

When you have finished the group activity assign students to read the parts of their text that deal with Indian independence. Depending on the quality of the discussion, this might need to be assigned as homework. A short quiz the next day may help motivate those who do not like to read.

2) DAY TWO:

Discuss briefly the route India chose to gain her indepedence. Ask students why Indians might have chosen to use the methods that they did to achieve their goals. After this brief discussion "From the Source- Quotes from the Mahatma" should be passed out along with the worksheet that accompanies it. Give students time in class to read the quotes and fill out the worksheet. Collect the worksheet and then lead a class discussion regarding the quotes. Possible discussion topics could include:

- Why, according to Gandhi, did India pursue the course that she did?
- How did Gandhi feel about the means to an end?
- What did he use as a foundation to justify non-violence?
- Do we have similar foundations or traditions in the U.S.?
- Would non-violence be possible in the U.S.? Why or Why not? Has it ever been used in the U.S.? (Martin Luther King Jr. is a good example.)
- Is non-violence always a good idea?

When this activity has been completed, have students begin researching the Indian independence movement so that they can complete their own timeline of the Gandhian movement. This will entail re-reading their textbook. They will also need to use other books unless their text is rife with dates. The timeline should have thirty dates. It should include ten dates for each decade(1920's, 1930's, and 1940's). Dates should pertain to the Gandhian movement.

BRIEFING REPORT- STATUS: OVERLORDS

The land of the Serfmen represents a considerable investment both in time and money on your part. You have fought several wars and many battles to control the land of the Serfmen. Many Overlords died in these battles and some died trying to make improvements in the land of the Serfmen. You feel that you owe these heroic Overlords something.

Originally, you became interested in the Serfmen's country because it contained items that were valuable for trade, therefore increasing your wealth. Power over the Serfmen also gave your group of Overlords more prestige than other groups of Overlords.

Since you have taken control of the Serfmen you have made great improvements in their country. You have helped develop a better infrastructure. (In other words, you have improved or created transportation and communication systems.) You have also helped unite the Serfmen, who previously were at war with one another throughout much of their history. You have brought all the best of your civilization to them including government, religion and education. You do allow the Serfmen to hold some positions of authority and you do allow some Serfmen to get a good education.

Despite all of the good that has come from your rule over the Serfmen, they seem discontented and resentful of your control . In fact, they have begun to use the communication system that you developed and are beginning to form an organized protest. This is worrisome to you. The Serfmen outnumber you in their country. Their weaponry is not as sophisticated as yours but you are a long way from your homeland. You have allowed Serfmen to serve in the army so they are familiar with your tactics. You have just finished fighting a major war with other Overlords and your supplies have been diminished. It looks as if you will soon be engaged at home in another major war, again with the other Overlords. The protest from Serfmen is growing. What will you do?

BRIEFING REPORT- STATUS: SERFMEN

Serfmen come from a very old and well-established tradition. Serfmen were performing basic surgery when the Overlords were just small barbaric tribes. One of the religions of the Serfmen is the oldest religion in the world that is still practiced. Serfmen have made many contributions to the world's civilizations.

Serfmen have been subject to many invasions throughout history. Just as the last major invasion force was dwindling as a power, the various groups of Overlords came to your country and fought amongst themselves and fought with you for control of your land. One group of Overlords won and you were once again under the control of a foreign power.

The Overlords have very little respect for your traditions and seem to want to impose their civilization upon you. You have become an outcast in your own country. The Overlords allowed some of you to gain an education but you are only allowed to go so far in their system. Segregation exists. You are not allowed to belong to certain clubs and so forth. You tried revolting once but the revolt failed and only resulted in stricter control by the Overlords.

The Overlords are not only controlling you politically but they are making you economically dependent on them as well. The Overlords are taking raw materials out of your country and turning the materials into finished products which they then sell at a nice profit. Serfmen are not allowed to turn raw materials into finished products.

You have begun to organize a protest. This is somewhat difficult since Serfmen have strong regional and religious ties. In fact, before the Overlords came, Serfmen did not see themselves as belonging to one united group and your history has been marked by many wars amongst different groups of Serfmen. In general, however, most Serfmen are agreed that the time has come that they should be independent from outside rule.

The logistics of gaining independence is a matter to consider. Militarily, in terms of weaponry, the Overlords have much more sophistication and they have more resources at their disposal. However, they have just finished fighting a major war with other Overlords so their supplies are diminished. Serfmen have a definite advantage in terms of manpower and they know the terrain. A long war could be very expensive however and very bloody. Serfmen have the tools of law and government brought by the Overlords and they also have a long tradition of spirituality. What will you , as Serfmen, do?

QUOTES FROM THE MAHATMA

1) "The spirit lies dormant in the brute, and he knows no law but that of physical might. The dignity of man requires obedience to a higher law- to the strength of the spirit." p.4

2) "Strength does not come from physical capacity. It comes from an indomitable will." p.3

3) "I still believe in the goodness of human nature whether it is English or any other." p.7

4) "My attack is not against individuals, it is directed against the system, against the aggregate called the Government."p.10

5) "We have become atheists for all practical purposes. And therefore we believe that in the long run we must rely upon physical force for our protection. In the face of physical danger we cast all our philosophy to the winds." p.13

6) "But the way of peace is open to her. That way will be found to be the shortest even though it may appear to be the longest to our impatient nature." p.61

7) "The way of peace insures internal growth and stability. We reject it because we fancy that it involves submission to the will of the ruler who has imposed himself upon us. But the moment we realize that the imposition is only so called and that through our unwillingness to suffer loss of life or property, we are party to the impostion, all we need do is to change that negative attitude of passive endorsement." p.61

QUESTIONS- Quotes from the Mahatma Worksheet

1. What does Gandhi believe to be the stronger force, physical power or spiritual power?

2. What is one thing that separates men from beasts according to Gandhi?

3. What is Gandhi's fundamental belief in the nature of man? Do you agree of disagree with his belief? Why or why not?

4. When faced with physical danger what happens to men's religion?

5. What religions might Gandhi have been talking about? What do most religions have to say about violence?

6. Who is it that Gandhi sees himself attacking?

7. Who declares most wars?

8. According to quote 6, what is one reason men resort to violence?

9.What does peace assure?

10. What are the outcomes of using violence? What is the logical conclusion of mutually assured destruction?

BACKGROUND ON GANDHI'S PHILOSOPHY FOR TEACHERS

Gandhi's philosophy on non-violence was derived from Hindu scriptures as well as readings from Christianity, Thoreau and Tolstoy. He believed in non-violence, not because he believed India to be incapable of military action but, because he believed non-violence to be a superior, spiritual, response to conflict. While violence oftentimes accomplished its objective quickly, it was accomplished by perpetuating deep roots of bitterness that would fester and re-emerge at another date. Violence begets violence. He believed in the dignity and goodness of man. He felt that it was possible to appeal to the better part of man through the use of non-violence. He used Hindu tradition to mobilize Indians. He applealed to their spritual nature and through his own example and charismatic personality, he was able to convince his people to adhere to the most successful non-violent revolution in history.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books containing the writings of Mohandas K. Gandhi-

1. Fischer, Louis, ed. The Essential Gandhi: His Life, Work, and Ideas. New York: Vintage Books, 1962.

2. Gandhi, M.K. Non-Violent Resistance. New York: Schocken Books, 1951.

3. Gandhi, M.K. Non-Violence in Peace and War. Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1942.

General texts on Indian Independence-

1. Farah, Mounir.; Karls, Andrea Berens.; Kortepeter, Carl Marx. The Human Experience. Columbus: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Company, 1985.

2. Watson, Francis. A Concise History of India. Great Britain: Thames and Hudson, 1974.

Enrichment Activities:

1) Show the movie Gandhi or assign it as extra-credit.
2) Show any of the Eyes On The Prize series which highlight Martin Luther King Jr.'s use of Gandhian priciples.

3) Assign students to read "Civil Disobedience" by Henry David Thoreau.